THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI MADHAVSINH SOLANKI): A proposal to open new Passport Offices during 1992-93 is under consideration. The number and location will depend on the available additional financial and manpower resources.

Exploration of Oil at Cochin High

2658. SHRI RAMESH CHENNITHALA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state the achievements made in exploration of oil at Cochin High during the last three years?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI B. SHANKARANAND): Two wells have been drilled so far, but no hydrocarbons have been discovered.

[*Translation*]

Exploration of Oil and Natural Gas in Madhya Pradesh

2659. SHRI PHOOL CHAND VERMA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any scheme of Indian Oil Corporation to explore oil and natural gas in Madhya Pradesh;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the places where oil and natural gas has been found in the state?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI B. SHANKARANAND): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) No commercial oil/gas discoveries has been made so far in Madhya Pradesh.

[*English*]

Development of Pepper Cultivation

2660. SHRI PALA K.M. MATHEW: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to formulate master plan for the cultivation, encouragement and development of pepper in Kerala;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the financial assistance proposed to be given to Kerala for development of pepper cultivation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN): (a) and (b). There is no specific proposal of formulating a master plan for cultivation, encouragement and development of pepper in Kerala. However, the Government of Kerala has recently prepared a project proposal for pepper development in Kerala at a cost of Rs. 160.92 crores phased over a period of seven years for external assistance. The main components of the project are rehabilitation of existing gardens, area expansion, strengthening of extension activities and research etc. The aim is to achieve a production target of 1.05 lakh tonnes of pepper by 2000 A.D.

(c) The quantum of financial assistance to Government of Government of Kerala for development of pepper cultivation during 1992-93 and 8th Plan (1992-97) has not yet been finalised. However, an amount of Rs. 337.04 lakh has been allocated out of which Rs. 330.30 lakh has already been released during 1991-92 to the Government of Kerala for development of pepper cultivation under the scheme "Integrated Proggramme for the development of Spices".

Export of Red Chillies to Shri Lanka

2661. SHRI HARIN PATHAK: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether NAFED had suffered huge loss on export of Red Chillies to Shri Lanka;